

REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated April 6, 2004. Claims 1 to 5, 7 to 15, 17 to 25, 27 to 35 and 37 to 40 remain in the application, with Claims 6, 16, 26 and 36 having been canceled. Claims 1, 11, 21 and 31 are the independent claims herein. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 3, 11, 13, 21, 23, 31 and 33 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,314,409 (Schneck). Additionally, Claims 2, 4, 5, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 19, 20, 22, 24, 25, 29, 30, 32, 34, 35, 39 and 40 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Schneck in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,038,061 (Lambert), Claims 8, 18, 28 and 28 were rejected under § 103(a) over Schneck in view of Lambert and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,917,912 (Ginter), Claims 6, 16, 26 and 36 were rejected under § 103(a) over Schneck in view of Ginter, and Claims 7, 17, 27 and 37 were rejected under § 103(a) over Schneck in view of Ginter and further in view of Lambert. It is noted that the rejection under § 102(b) over Schneck is erroneous since Schneck issued nearly one year *after* the U.S. filing date of the subject application. Accordingly, it is believed that the rejection should be based on 35 U.S.C. § 102(e). Nonetheless, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested.

The present invention concerns providing access to electronic documents stored in a control apparatus. According to one aspect of the invention, electronic documents are stored with information indicating a control period for which the documents are accessible. If the control period expires, access to the document is prohibited. However, the apparatus keeps the document in the storage for a predetermined time even after the control period expires. Therefore, if a user requests to access the expired

document, upon user confirmation of the same, the control period is updated to be extended and the user is permitted temporary access to the document for a charge different from a regular charge. Thus, documents whose document control period has not expired, whose document control period has been extended by the period updating means, or to which temporary access has been allowed, can be transferred to the user upon request.

With specific reference to the claims, amended independent Claim 1 is a document control apparatus for storing and controlling electronic documents accessible from an external apparatus, comprising registering means for registering electronic documents to a storage, the electronic documents being transmitted from an external transmitting apparatus, period controlling means for storing information of a document control period of the electronic documents registered by the registering means, keeping means for keeping the electronic documents in the storage for a predetermined period even after the document control period of the electronic document has expired, access prohibiting means for prohibiting access from the external apparatus to the electronic document whose document control period has expired, period updating means for updating the document control period for an extension of the document control period based on a user confirmation, temporary access allowing means for allowing temporary access to the electronic document whose document control period has expired based on a predetermined charge, and transferring means for transferring the electronic document to the external apparatus based on a user request, wherein the transferred electronic document is a document whose document control period has not expired, a document whose document control period has been extended by the period updating means, or a document to which temporary access has been allowed by the temporary access allowing means.

Amended independent Claims 11, 21 and 31 are system, method and computer medium claims, respectively, that substantially correspond to Claim 1.

The applied art, alone or in any permissible combination, is not seen to disclose or to suggest the features of the present invention. More particularly, the applied art is not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the feature of keeping electronic documents in a storage for a predetermined period even after a document control period of the electronic document has expired, allowing temporary access to the electronic document whose document control period has expired based on a predetermined charge, and transferring to an external apparatus an electronic document whose document control period has not expired, whose document control period has been extended, or a document to which temporary access has been allowed.

Schneck is merely seen to disclose a system for controlling access to data in which users are prevented from accessing protected portions of data, other than in a non-usable form. Schneck is not, however, seen to disclose or to suggest anything with regard to keeping a document in a storage for a predetermined period even after a control period for the document has expired. Moreover, Schneck is not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the feature of allowing temporary access to the electronic document whose document control period has expired based on a predetermined charge, or that a document transferred to an external apparatus is any of an electronic document whose document control period has not expired, whose document control period has been extended, or a document to which temporary access has been allowed. Accordingly, Schneck is not seen to disclose or to suggest the features of the present invention.


Lambert and Ginter have been studied but are not seen to add anything that, when combined with Schneck, would have disclosed or suggested the features of the

present invention. More particularly, any permissible combination of Schneck, Lambert and/or Ginter, is not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the feature of keeping electronic documents in a storage for a predetermined period even after a document control period of the electronic document has expired, allowing temporary access to the electronic document whose document control period has expired based on a predetermined charge, and transferring to an external apparatus an electronic document whose document control period has not expired, whose document control period has been extended, or a document to which temporary access has been allowed.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, the entire application is believed to be in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested at the Examiner's earliest convenience.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa, California office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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